
EDITORIALS.

IN CONNECTION with the nomenclature question, which is proving to be one of great difficulty, it may be well to consider the subject of describing new species. It is a fascinating employment, **New Species** but, like many fascinating things, has its dangers. That plants must be classified and properly named no one will question, and that this work is very far from completion is no less evident. The proper classification of a form, however, is based upon facts very different from those thought adequate when taxonomy was almost the only phase of botany. In those days, the classification was confessedly artificial, the purpose being little more than a convenient cataloguing of forms. In these days, however, classification is based upon genetic relationships as indicated by a careful study of morphology. As a consequence, those courses of instruction which are logical permit no independent taxonomic work except as a sequence of morphological investigation.

The higher groups, perhaps, present the least difficulty in determining the general relationships of a form; so that the details of its morphology may not be necessary. But even here such a knowledge of the morphology of the group, and of its habits of variation, is essential as can come only from what is called, for convenience, its monographic study. In view of the immense difficulties of synonymy it would seem wise to reduce taxonomic publication within the limits of reasonable certainty.

In the lower forms, however, and especially in the case of those which are polymorphic, such as many parasitic fungi, hasty taxonomic publication becomes almost inexcusable. One can imagine no more hopeless tangle of synonymy and relationship than that presented by the average list of "new species" dealing with such forms, in which the characters are drawn from form and size, without any knowledge of life history and power of variation. If a botanical congress could devise some code for the suppression or restriction of "new species," it would help towards the application of a code for nomenclature.